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ABSTRACT

The ethical issues concerning the use of behavioral procedures are founded on concerns relating to behavioral control. One major recurring ethical issue is that of coercion. The focus of this paper centers on the question: Ought behavioral programs to be employed even when they might be against the volition of the participant? A theoretical and administrative overview of client consent is presented. The need for incorporating self-control procedures into behavioral programming is emphasized. The theoretical position taken is one which emphasizes that environment and human behavior are bound in a reciprocal interaction process. It is suggested that the term behavior analysis replace behavior modification because of its focus on an analysis of the interaction between environment and human behavior rather than on any single procedure which superimposes control of one on the other without respecting the interaction process. A suggested revision of teacher-training in behavioral procedures is offered. The need for additional emphases is discussed in detail. These emphases include complete behavioral assessment, knowledge of teacher modeling effects, consideration of antecedent events prior to contingency manipulation, a more thorough understanding of consequent conditions, and incorporation of the long-range objective of the student as the locus of control in any behavioral program. (Author)

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Clinical and Ethical Implications for Teacher-Training in Behavior Modification

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Introduction

Skinner has emphasized the need to employ our understanding of learning theory to teach students how they learn (Skinner, 1969, p. 193). During the past few years, however, behavioral concepts and techniques have become a significant part of teacher-training for classroom management; it is important to direct the focus of behavior modification in schools toward student involvement and self-management programs. The ethical concern regarding the use of behavior modification in institutions has focused primarily on programs which are designed and implemented without client input (Biklen, Note 1). Public school classrooms need not repeat the patterns of institutional care in which the client is frequently a passive participant. Given a basic understanding of learning theory, and continued consultant support, teachers have the potential for developing classrooms which not only teach specific academic skills but also the broader skills of <u>how to learn</u>. <u>How to learn</u> skills are the skills which can truely "free" an individual to actualize him/herself.[1] Increased understanding of how individuals learn, increases both our own skills at teaching in a classroom and a student's ability to teach him/herself. Though it would be illusory to offer young children

[1] In accordance with the APA Task Force on the Guidelines for Nonsexist Language (<u>American Psychologist</u>, 1975, 30, 682-684) this paper uses combined pronoun forms.

equal decision-making power with adults, each child comes to the classroom with a personal history and an individual set of perceptions of him/herself and his/her world. It is important that consideration be given not only to professional perceptions of a classroom situation; we also need to heed the child's own personal statement, because it is through the child's explanation that we gain an understanding of the self-reinforcement and self-punishment contingencies operating (Meisels, 1974). If we are to teach children how to help themselves, we must begin with teaching children skills in accurate self-assessment and self-monitoring.

Over the past ten years, the efficacy of behavioral procedures has become more and more evident (Franks, 1969, 1973; Ullmann & Krasner, 1965, 1969). Learning theory principles applied to therapy have proved superior to traditional psychotherapeutic techniques in effecting behavior change (Eysenck, 1952; Levitt, 1957; Paul, 1966, 1967). These principles are now being applied more and more frequently in school settings (Hewett, 1969; Homme, 1970; O'Leary & O'Leary, 1972). In both clinical and educational settings, ethical issues concerning the control of human behavior are more relevant than ever before (Miron, 1968).

Ethical issues concerning the use of behavioral procedures are founded on concerns relating to behavioral control. Though there is

one set of clinical issues concerned with the experimental and empirical validity of such procedures, the social-political issues focus on the concern that these procedures may be used to regulate the behaviors, feelings, or attitudes of non-consenting individuals or groups (London, 1969). Bandura (1969) has noted that behavior control does not necessarily mean behavior constraint. Though some behaviorists have chosen to emphasize environment as the first cause in human behavior (Skinner, 1971), it is also possible to take the position that the environment is a function of human behavior. The position which seems most clinically and ethically sound, is one which emphasizes that environment and human behavior are bound in a reciprocal interaction process (Bandura, 1974). Individuals trained in behavioral procedures, then, must be trained with an emphasis on training clients in these procedures. While teachers and clinicians alike may employ behavioral techniques in order to effect behavior change in a student or client, the long range goal of any behavioral program must culminate in learning self-control procedures. This goal most successfully respects the interaction between environment and human behavior, and the ethical issues concerned with maintaining a balance between these two factors.

One major recurring ethical concern is that of coercion. Kazdin (1975) has defined three issues which deal with coercion: (1) Is

planned modification of other people's behavior as an ethically activity, justifiable? (2) what specific means are employed for behavioral change? and (3) ought behavioral programs to be employed even when they might be against the volition of the participant? In this paper only the third point will be fully discussed.

The objection to behavior modification as a legitimate, ethical endeavor can be answered on one level by the large and growing amount of literature verifying the basic principles of experimental psychology and learning theory. The moral question is not whether or not behavior modification should be used. Rather, the real issues concern who will control, by what means, and towards what goals (Bandura, 1969, p. 85; Krasner, 1962; Skinner, 1971).

There have been two separate issues which pertain to the means employed in behavior modification. One issue is the bribery objection. The distinction between bribery and reinforcement is based on the discrimination of rewards for immoral or corrupt behavior, and rewards for adaptive social and/or academic skills taught in behavioral intervention programs (O'Leary, Poulos, & Devine, 1972). The other major criticism of behavioral procedures is concerned with the use of aversive techniques. Though behaviorists have given rationale for the use of such techniques in specific cases (Bandura, 1969, p. 87), there is much concern from within the profession regarding the use

of aversion in treatment; ethical guidelines are in the process of being developed (Schwitzgebel, 1974; Cautela, Note 2; Samdperil, Note 3). Fortunately, the public school system is one institution which already has legal safeguards in this area.

Of primary concern with young students is the third aspect of coercion: client consent. A commitment to greater student involvement in the development of treatment plans means that those of us working with young children must focus on the cognitive and social skills necessary to enable a child to be an active participant in his/her own educational plan. In order to pursue the goal of self-actualization for each student, we must make a commitment to teaching the skills necessary for the child to be successfully involved in decision-making processes. It is important that teachers employing behavioral techniques understand both: (1) how these procedures relate theoretically to learning theory, and (2) what variables, in both the child's external environment (Skinner, 1968) as well as internal environment (Bandura, 1974; Cautela, 1968; Wolpe, 1968) must be considered before a clinically sound treatment plan can be implemented.

Behavior modification as a set of clinical procedures is relatively new (Franks, 1969; London, 1974). Concerns have been expressed regarding the need to establish not only ethical guidelines,

but also certification standards for the practice of behavioral procedures with other individuals ("Individual Rights and the Federal Role in Behavior Modification," 1974; Stuart, Cautela, Stolz, & Azrin, 1975). There is an educational as well as an ethical need for ongoing teacher-training and available consultation in behavior therapy. Different levels of certification are viewed as desirable by this author because they would facilitate means by which to hold individuals accountable. Teachers can, and do, successfully employ a variety of behavioral procedures in the classroom. However, trained behavioral consultants are lacking in many schools which employ behavioral programs. Such a support service is a reasonable clinical and ethical demand of teachers who realistically cannot be trained on an expert level in all clinical and educational fields used by a public school teacher.

A basic understanding of operant conditioning (rewards and punishments) is offered today in most programs which train teachers. Perhaps, because learning theory has traditionally been studied in departments of psychology rather than education, schools of education by-in-large are not up to date with recent developments in the field of behaviorism. Teacher-training in this area, both at the university level and in school systems, has, to date, focused primarily on the manipulation of consequences in order to achieve teacher-desired

behavioral change. The primary purpose of this paper is to emphasize those variables which affect learning but are not adequately considered in teacher-training programs. Consequently, these variables are often forgotten while assessing a student's problem and developing a treatment plan. To safeguard against coercion, to protect the student and/or parent's rights to consent ("Guidelines...," 1969) and involvement in an educational plan, and to broaden teachers' behavioral understanding of maladaptive behavior, it is essential to deal with the following issues in teacher-training instruction.

Teacher-Training in Behavior Analysis

Behavior modification is, perhaps, a poor choice of names for the set of learning principles and procedures covered by this term (Davison & Stuart, 1975). Many varied medical and psychological procedures are designed to modify behavior, as, for example, drugs, psychotherapy, as well as conditioning procedures. Behavior modification as a psychological term, however, generally refers only to

> the use of experimentally established principles of learning for the purpose of changing unadaptive behavior. Unadaptive habits are weakened and eliminated; adaptive habits are initiated and strengthened" (Wolpe, 1969, p. vii).

The term behavior analysis (Binder, Note 4) might be a more appropriate label for the procedures used by behaviorists because of its focus on an analysis of the interaction between environment and human behavior rather than on any single procedure which superimposes control of one

on the other without respecting the interaction process. The goal of behavioral procedures is, after all, to teach participants how to analyze their own behavior and its interaction with their environment. Though in some ways it seems silly to argue over terms, it is important to correct the unfortunate connotation that "behavior modification" of behavior infers one human being controlling another.

A behavioral explanation of learning includes three major variables: the behavior itself, the antecedent event that elicits the behavior, and the consequences which follow the behavior and influence the probability of its occurrence. Learning theory principles deal with environmental arrangements that increase or decrease the likelihood that various behaviors will be learned and performed (Rimm & Masters, 1974). If classroom children are cooperative and active, their past and current environmental experiences encourage such behavior. It is assumed that if classroom children are obstinate or disruptive, their past and current environmental experiences serve to encourage <u>that</u> behavior. In addition to antecedents and consequences directly affecting behavior of the child, the classroom environment also offers models which enhance the probability of observational learning (Bandura, 1969). In observational learning the child learns by observing the effects of various antecedent and consequent conditions on someone else.

To summarize, then, teachers influence the behavior of students by the choice of curricula, the modeling behavior, the classroom rules

which are established, as well as the shaping of specific classroom behaviors on the part of both individual students and the group.

The Need for a Complete Behavioral Assessment

Teachers are familiar with the premises underlying individualization of academic curricula (Mager, 1962). The same set of notions underlie programs in teaching new social skills. Any educational program, be it academic or social, must begin at the individual child's current level of functioning. Therefore, before any decision can be made regarding the implementation of behavioral procedures, one must first determine those deficit and surfeit behaviors exhibited by the child, as well as the child's strengths on which a program can be founded. Cautela (1968) emphasizes the need for a complete behavioral assessment which determines both the child's behavioral repertoire and the environmental antecedent and consequent conditions that serve to elicit and maintain behavior. Failure to complete a behavioral analysis often results in an inadequate behavioral program; incorrect assumptions about the child's existing behavioral repertoire and motivational functioning may also result in programs, which some research has found, detrimental to learning (Feingold & Mahoney, 1975; Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973; Levine & Fasnacht, 1974).

The behavioral assessment includes an operational, measurable definition of the maladaptive behavior (Buckley & Walker, 1970). Abstract labels of such internal states as unmotivated, low self-esteem,

poor self-image, -- are often used as explanations for behavior when actually they are merely descriptions of a set of behaviors which need to be concretely defined. Traditionally, behaviorists have dealt only with observable, measurable behavior, termed overt behavior; however, in the past decade, behaviorists have begun to attempt to operationalize and measure covert behavior. Covert behaviors include thoughts, feelings, and images (Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974, p. 110).

Sloane (Note 5) makes the point well in a discussion on self-image in children. From experience, he finds that most children who are labeled as having a poor self-image have endured constant failure in their environment. They do poorly in school, have few positive relationships, lack both social and activity skills that would result in positive social reinforcement from others. Covert behaviors which might be operative in the example offered by Sloane include negative self-statements, images of past failures, and anxiety. A child who is told by his environment that he is bad responds with good reality-testing when he then describes himself in a similar manner; he is not "neurotic;" he has simply bought the label applied by others. The issue, as Sloane points out, is how to begin correcting this situation -- by trying to get inside the child to correct the state of his self-image or by changing the environmental experiences to offer

the child positive rather than negative feedback. Adopting this latter point of view as one offering the best opportunity for successful behavior change, the first step in employing behavior analysis in the classroom is a nonjudgemental, quantitative description of covert as well as overt behavior.

A behavioral assessment should be initiated prior to the beginning of any behavioral program and continued throughout the treatment and follow-up of the program. Failure to engage in a thorough ongoing assessment may be due to several factors. School systems do not usually provide assessment forms for social behavior -- the way academic assessment materials are provided. While many schools have psychologists and diagnostic teachers available for academic testing, there are most often no trained individuals available to aid the teacher in consultation or merely in the man-power needed for the observational data necessary for a behavioral assessment. Due to the orientation of most schools of education, the mere task of operationalizing a classroom social situation is difficult for teachers. In addition, even if one has the skills of assessment, the process entails a lot of time and energy.

The final benefits of completing a thorough assessment of a situation, aside from the ethical safeguards, are overwhelmingly in favor of such a procedure. It is, however, unfortunately much easier to make this point while sitting together and exchanging classroom

experiences than in a journal article. It is only possible here to make a plea that teacher-training institutions increase their emphasis on the development of teacher-skills in behavioral assessment and develop, through discussion of clinical and ethical issues involved, a firm commitment to use these procedures.

The Teacher as a Model

Much research has now shown that children do learn through observation of others (Bandura, 1969). It is important as a teacher learns the skills of behavioral assessment and procedural implementation, that s/he have an accurate perception of his or her own behavior in the classroom. Social reinforcement by adults does, under certain conditions, serve to increase a child's tendency to imitate the adult (Baer & Sherman, 1964; Bandura & Huston, 1961). The better a teacher is able to exhibit consideration of others, cooperation, active learning, and self-control -- the more likely it is that students will also exhibit these behaviors. Those characteristics of both the model and the observer which enhance observational learning or imitation have been reviewed by Bandura (1969). In general, however, the teacher usually appears to be an influential model in early elementary school since adults are the main social reinforcer for most young children. The repeated long-term failings of "Do as I say; not as I do," indicate the strength of modeling on learning.

The issue of modeling is an important one for teachers to consider throughout a discussion on any particular set of psychological or educational procedures. In addition to whatever is learned due to the procedures being employed, the child may also learn to model the adult. There are, for example, psychodynamic explanations and procedures for encouraging "acting-out" behavior in some withdrawn children; however, if the adult must, in the process, restrain a child, we then must deal with the physically aggressive behavior modeled. If a teacher puts his/her class on a token economy designed by the teacher, then in addition to increased motivation to complete tasks, we must also deal with the modeled authoritarianism.

When one considers the observational learning which takes place in children in a classroom, it becomes even more important that we direct all programs towards the goal of self-control skills. Maslow's (1968) model of self-actualization is understandably popular in humanistic psychology and education because of its emphasis on intrinsic controls. The difficulty with the concept of self-actualization for this author, however, is the lack of operationalized direction. Behavioral procedures offer a clear, concise set of skills by which one can increase learning of any particular task. In addition, if those of us who employ behavioral procedures in the classroom wish to teach <u>self-actualization</u>, we must program our classrooms to move from teacher control to student control.

The Role of the Teacher in Determining Appropriate Antecedent Conditions

One of the greatest ethical problems with behavior analysis in teacher-training is that it traditionally dealt only with the behavior of the child and the teacher-determined consequences. To be sure, consequences can be arranged in order to increase specific study behaviors, e.g., task orientation in the classroom. Very frequently, however, children do not carry out the academic tasks because the choice of curricula (antecedent event) fails to involve or interest them. Classroom behavior problems often begin with a poor fit between a child's skills and the task (Taft, Note 6). There must be a diagnosis of the student's academic strengths and weaknesses before antecedent conditions can be evaluated. An understanding of task analysis (Junkala, 1973) is necessary in order that a teacher insure an appropriate task for any specific child. For example, let us take a child who misbehaves during group lessons. Frequently, without the information gained from a complete behavioral analysis, teachers attribute behavior to what are assumed to be implicit emotional reactions. Our hypothetical child's teacher assumes that the student is misbehaving because he isn't motivated to learn and the teacher decides to employ a token economy program to increase the child's attending behavior. A thorough assessment of this child's learning style, however, results in the

diagnosis of an auditory problem. Children with auditory difficulties must receive curricula which are designed to offer visual input to compensate for their difficulty in processing the spoken word. The use of a contingency program to increase attending behavior must be considered coercive in this instance since it can only teach the child to sit still and obey orders. The presentation of the lesson would have to be modified in order for the child to attend. A teacher who is interested in modifying the academic behavior of a student should first attempt to find appropriate curricula which will elicit the desired behavior rather than focus on the undesirable, competing responses being exhibited. This serves both the student and the teacher.

In addition to understanding antecedent academic events, it is important to consider antecedent conditions which influence social behavior. Teacher-training in behavior analysis must increase its consideration of the variables of overt environmental conditions as well as covert conditions, e.g., self-statements, anxiety, and anger. Wahler and Cormier (1970) present a useful model for teachers in determining those environmental antecedent conditions which serve to elicit specific behaviors in question when working with children.

The Role of the Teacher in Determining Consequences and Establishing Contingencies

Most teacher-training in behavior analysis has focused on those operant conditioning techniques which modify behavior by manipulation

of environmental consequences (Skinner, 1968). Despite the need for more attention to antecedent variables, classroom teachers have concentrated on developing academic and social programs based on environmental consequences and their powerful effect on which behaviors are learned and/or performed. Exposure to behavioral procedures has greatly broadened educators' understanding of social learning theory. Teachers' reactions are strong determinants of the type of student behavior exhibited in the classroom. Similarly, the reactions of students greatly shape teachers' responses (Smith & Smith, 1970). We can be taught to shout, to punish, or to reinforce positively. Many teachers inadvertently control negatively by withdrawal of threat or termination of shouting as soon as students follow directions. As this pattern is repeated, students in a classroom soon learn to cooperate as soon as the aversive conditions are presented. This type of technique is coercive in that it is, in some sense, punitive for the students; more important, there is no positively based cooperation between the teacher and the students regarding the educational experience. The students are participating only to avoid undesirable consequences rather than becuase they experience reinforcement and are supportive of the activity. At the same time, the teacher is being coerced into threatening or shouting because each time the students cooperate in that situation, the teacher is negatively reinforced for using that

procedure. A greater understanding and skill in behavioral assessment will increase successful use of the basic principles of reward and punishment in the classroom.

Presently, behavioral programs in schools fail both clinically and ethically because of the lack of attention to what has become a clinical truism in behavior therapy: the elimination of maladaptive behavior should in most cases be accompanied by the formation of new behavior if there is to be permanent positive change. It is vital that teachers trained in behavior analysis procedures learn to combine procedures in a manner which takes the whole child into account. In order for management of maladaptive behavior to be successful, new, appropriate behaviors must be taught to replace undesirable behavior. The term behavior modification has been incorrectly used for many situations which are merely punitive and restrictive, such as prolonged isolation. Those procedures, based on learning theory, which can be appropriately labeled behavior modification or behavior analysis do emphasize, instead, a positive, expansive setting in which a child learns how to more successfully fulfill his or her individual needs (Meisels, 1974). Reinforcement theory emphasizes the need to re-program a child's social system rather than the child (Patterson, 1969); this is a needed clinical as well as ethical emphasis.

A Necessary Ethical Commitment: The Student as the Locus of Control

The implicit, if not explicit, goal of all psychological and educational procedures is to aid the child in gaining skills so that s/he can more successfully control his/her environment and influence his/her ow actions (Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974). Bandura (1969, p. 239) emphasizes the value in self-regulatory mechanisms when he states that the highest level of autonomy is behavior generated by self-evaluative and other self-reinforcing consequences. There is some experimental evidence which supports the notion that individuals who perceive themselves as the locus of control for their own behavior maintain newly-acquired skills better than those individuals who perceive the locus of control either as in their environment or as a function of chance(Rotter & Mulry, 1965; Secord & Backman, 1964).

This area of behavioral self-control is relatively new, and teacher-training, in particular, needs more emphasis on employing behavioral techniques to increase self-control behaviors. Cautela (1969) offers an important overview of the advantages and disadvantages of teaching self-control. Perhaps the strongest objection to behavior analysis in schools has come from our failure to put the locus of control back on the student.

Behavior analysis is a set of procedures designed to enhance learning. Ultimately, as in any learning situation, the controls should be internalized by the learner (McGinnies & Ferster, 1971, p. 107).

It is with those that place total emphasis on modification without necessary attention to internalization and self-control that we must ethically concern ourselves.

Conclusion

The issue of freedom is a vital one which concerns both the humanist and the scientist. Though the behaviorist does not accept the view that freedom is "free will," the value of freedom is no less important. The philosophical goal of freedom and self-actualization (Maslow, 1968) should be a priority in the goals of any educational setting. From a behavioral focus, freedom is the number of alternatives an individual has available in any specific situation (Thoresen & Mahoney, 1974). The greater the number of available alternatives, the greater the possibility for one to actualize oneself, and the less the possibility of coercion. Bandura (1969) addresses the issue of coercion from a behaviorist's understanding of the term freedom:

> A more fundamental ethical distinction can be made in terms of whether the power to influence others is utilized for the advantage of the controller or for the benefit of the controllee, rather than in terms of the illusory criterion of willing consent (p.82).

As use of behavior analysis in schools grows, it ought to systematically increase the number of alternatives available to children, while, simultaneously changing the major locus of control from the teacher to the student. In this way, we as teachers can move effectively from controllers to facilitators.

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